

When  
Health**MEETS CARE**By G.K.  
Sharman**IT'S GOOD TO BE DOM MEFFE, ORLANDO'S  
OWN "SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR."**

PHOTO BY CHARLES HODGES



Dom Meffe, the entrepreneur, seemed to have it made in the spring of 2006. He had just retired from Curascript, a specialty pharmaceutical distribution company that he founded in 2000 and sold for \$333 million in 2004, staying on to run it as a division of its new parent company until that merger was well established. He was barely 40 years old and could easily afford to retire — take it easy, take up golf maybe. Right.

"I tried taking some time off, but I wasn't ready to sit home," says soft-spoken Meffe.

Other people didn't want Meffe — who has been dubbed "serial entrepreneur" because of all the successful enterprises he's established — sitting home either. He has played a major role in Orlando's dominance of the pharmaceutical distribution industry over the past decade. His phone rang off the hook with offers to step in and run one business or another. One company in

particular, Parthenon Capital, remained persistent, urging Meffe to accept the position of CEO at a new business that would produce heart-disease and cancer diagnostic tools.

Dom Meffe, the cancer survivor, wanted to continue working in the field that is so close to his heart. Health care is not just a business for Meffe, it's a calling. His sister died of a brain tumor and both he and his wife have survived cancer. So, he finally said yes.

The result of that decision is Triad

Isotopes. Based in downtown Orlando, the radiopharmaceutical services company controls a network of pharmacies across the Southeast and focuses on three areas of diagnosis and treatment: the nuclear pharmacy operation compounds and distributes radiopharmaceuticals used in gamma imaging for cancer and cardiac diagnosis; the cyclotron operation produces FDG, or fluorodeoxyglucose, which is used in PET scans for cancer diagnosis; and the brachytherapy seed division promotes this advanced cancer treatment method, which involves placing tiny radioactive seeds near the site of the tumor, in turn reducing exposure to the surrounding healthy tissue.

Nuclear medicine as a whole is a small but growing segment of the specialty pharma industry. Meffe expects his company's products to treat some 900,000 patients in 2008. An estimated 20 cents of every prescription dollar is spent on specialty pharma, and the total spending is expected to reach \$70 billion this year.

Orlando is the place to be if you're in the specialty pharma business. The city has the largest specialty pharma distribution presence of any metro area in the nation, as well as highly rated hospital systems and a strong life sciences research and development presence.

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Meffe, the Orlando businessman, is once again standing on top of a rising pyramid: Triad is currently the fourth-largest company in its industry. It concentrates its operations in small- and medium-sized markets, such as Fort Myers, Fl., Florence, S.C., Mobile, Ala., and Valdosta and Athens, Ga., where it holds 90 to 100 percent of the market share for the industry. Being the big fish in a small pond is "an inherent barrier to entry," Meffe explains. Let the big boys — such as Cargill and G.E. — fight it out in the cities. Owning a market that's not big enough for two players is a savvy business strategy. Emphasizing personalized service is another smart practice. It was his sister's struggle, not just with the disease but with the bureaucracy, that inspired the high-touch business model that has characterized each and every one of Meffe's health-care businesses.

Meffe's efforts have attracted more than a little notice, including a "Crusader of the Year" profile in the December 2007 issue of *Inc.* magazine. He is reluctant to show people a copy, humbled by the Superman-style drawing that accompanies the write-up.

Triad is business number eight for Meffe, who got his start in the entrepreneurial arena running Chuck E. Cheese franchises with his father in Pennsylvania. While in grad school in Tampa, he started a management consulting firm. Meffe later sold his share back to his partners to become part owner of Golf-Rite Products, which acquired two golf shoe companies and later was sold to a group of investors. His focus shifted to health care after his sister was diagnosed.

Meffe attributes his success to luck, smart co-workers and employees, and his faith. He is on the board of Shepherd's Hope, a not-for-profit group that provides non-emergency health care for those in need.

"I'm supposed to do this," he says. "Opportunities are given to you for a reason. If you listen close enough, you know what you're supposed to do." ✖

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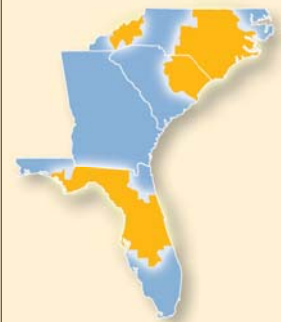
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